Kalpakkam. The R&D work of the Department of Atomic Energy in the field of nuclear power generation is oriented towards a long-term strategy involving three stages, namely, the current generation of pressurised heavy water reactors as the first stage, plutonium-fuelled fast breeder reactors as the second stage and reactors operating on the Uranium (233)-Thorium fuel cycle as the third stage.

(b) The advanced heavy water reactor, designed to produce most of its energy from Thorium, is under engineering development at present. The question of setting up of power plant(s) based on such reactors can be decided only at a later stage.

Development of fisheries in hilly districts of Uttar Pradesh

*29. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a)whether a proposal for development of fisheries in hilly districts of Uttar Pradesh has been received by Government and considered; and

(b)if so, the details and the status thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) The Government of India have received a project proposal from the Government of Uttar Pradesh in May, 1996 for seeking external assistance for the development of Trout Fish Farming in the hilly areas of the State. The Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance have informed that the proposal was posed to the French authorities for assistance under the Indo-French Financial Protocol in April, 1998, but the French authorities were of the view that since the proposal does not meet the technical and structural parameters required for eligibility, they cannot consider the proposal under the Indo-French Financial Protocol.

However, development of fish farming in the hilly region of Uttar Pradesh is already covered under the ongoing Centrally Sponsored Scheme on "Development of Freshwater Aquaculture".

Protest by China on Defence Minister's Remarks

*30. SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a)whether Prople's Republic of China has protested against the remarks of India's Defence Minister describing China as the number one threat to India; and

(b)if so, what has been the response of Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) The Chinese side have conveyed, with reference to the Raksha Mantri's statements pertaining to China's military capabilities and potential, that there has been improvement in India-China relations in recent years and denied that China posed a threat to India. The Chinese side expressed the hope that the Indian Government would take necessary measures to prevent recurrence of such incidents so as to facilitate the sound and smooth growth of Sino-Indian relations.

^We have pointed out to the Chinese side that we attach importance to friendly relations with China. The two sides have agreed to build a constructive and cooperative relationship oriented towards the 21st century. We seek a relationship in which the two sides would be responsive to each other's concerns. Our concerns have been made known to the Chinese side. We remain committed to the process of dialogue to resolve outstanding differences. We seek to develop a friendly, cooperative, good neighbourly and mutually beneficial relationship with China, our largest neighbour.